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THE OVERTHROW OF THE MAYER GOVERNMENT

Premier Mayer fell on 21 May because an absolute majority of the 624 National Assembly delegates, including the Gaullists on whom he had depended for support, refused to accept his aggressive program to relieve the government's grave financial difficulties. He demanded extensive economies, increased revenues and constitutional reforms, as well as broad decree powers which the Assembly had refused in the past.

Mayer's position became critical last March just before his trip to Washington, when he was forced to appeal to the National Assembly for an emergency advance from the Bank of France. Although the Assembly voted the advance by a narrow margin, many of former Premier Pinay's supporters were alienated when Pinay was blamed for the government's financial difficulties, and Mayer's efforts to appease these elements cost him some Popular Republican and Gaullist support. His subsequent insistence on a realistic program distasteful to both center and rightist elements precipitated the crisis.

Mayer's overthrow is a blow to American policy objectives in Western Europe. While a later government will probably be given at least some of the special financial powers demanded by Mayer, this is not likely in the immediate future; hence a further increase in inflationary pressures as well as new cuts in defense expenditures can be expected.

Mayer, moreover, had committed himself more openly than his predecessor to EDC ratification; the next government can be expected to sidestep this issue in return for maximum support on domestic problems. Since General DeGaulle's withdrawal from active politics leaves his following free to enter a government, a center-right coalition without Robert Schuman's Popular Republicans has now for the first time become a clear possibility. The policy of European integration will not be abandoned, however, inasmuch as such a coalition would depend on support from Rene Pleven's small war-time resistance group.

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Former Premier Pinay has regained much prestige in recent weeks and will be a prominent contender for the premiership. Since he also is likely to insist on a stern financial program, however, he may be unable to obtain sufficient Assembly support at this time. Should the crisis be prolonged, a "national union" government of all non-Communist parties under a more flexible leader such as former Premier Queuille would be the ultimate resort.

Contrary to press reports, the French Constitution does not permit the executive to dissolve Parliament now, since it is necessary to have at least two governments overthrown by an absolute majority of the National Assembly deputies within an 18 month period before a special election can occur. The deputies, disliking the prospect of a new election, are most unlikely to precipitate one by overthrowing the next government.